

AT HOME WITH ... | Donovan and Michelle Bailey



STUART NIMMO PHOTOS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Donovan Bailey relaxes with wife Michelle in the family room of their Oakville home, which they built themselves. Bailey likes the "minimalist European look of clean lines, flat roofs, lots of windows."

You would think Donovan Bailey's home would be hard to miss in the heart of Oakville.

The custom-built, sprawling two-storey abode of the World and Olympic champion sprinter has a stone and grey-green stucco exterior.

But the house is so secluded that at times even Bailey has trouble finding it.

"My house is very private; it is a massively treed (one and a half acre) ravine property lot, tucked away in the middle of town. For six or seven months of the year, especially in the summertime, it is completely treed over — 40-foot trees hanging over the road, so I sometimes miss it and drive by it," says Bailey, whose businesses include Core Health and Wellness in Oakville, devoted to fitness and rehab services.

"The driveway is tucked in between the trees, so unless you know where you are going, you can drive by."

Bailey, who in the 1990s was declared Sprinter of the Decade by *Track and Field News*, has lived in the dwelling with his wife Michelle, a real estate agent, and their 11-year-old daughter, for four years.

Bailey knew what he was getting into when he decided to build his home from scratch.

"I've built a few houses in my life," he explains. "I always describe building my house as kind of like preparing for the Olympic Games. Every year you tear your body down and you build it up brick by brick or muscle by muscle — day by day. I am a partner in a company — we do commercial and residential development real estate. I love the idea of seeing barren land, service the land and then build it from there.

"The experience of building a house has always been great for me. I always itch to build. The style of home I like, well there is really not a lot of them in Toronto.

"Toronto homes are more traditional. I love the minimalist European look of clean lines, flat roofs, lots of windows."

One of the focal points is the 10-metre windows at back of the house, exposing the ravine. The windows run from the basement to the ceiling of the second level. They are adorned with equally long fabric drapes in shades of brown, taupe and cream.

"I was attracted to the area because it is in the old part of Oak-

He's built a few homes, but Donovan Bailey says his sprawling, secluded Oakville abode is a gem

Former Olympian sprinter compares building a home to building his body, writes *Kathryn Kates*



Donovan Bailey with his wife Michelle in the hallway overlooking the house. The pool table seen at lower left is in the basement, the primary gathering area. Above right is the dining room.



At left is one of the living rooms in the custom built home. At right is the library. One of the focal points is the 10-metre windows at back of the house, which run from the basement to the second-level ceiling.

ville. It is a very irregular lot and the trees on the property were old. There is also a stream running down the back. It is a great lookout. It is nice summer and winter." But in the summer, he especially enjoys the plush greenery.

The basement is the primary gathering area. The stairs from the main floor lead down into an open area where you will find a poker table, pool table and bar. Also downstairs are a children's play area, three bathrooms, a wine cellar, gym, sauna room, steam room, theatre and a storage area.

The main floor includes a foyer, main dining room, mudroom, family room, kitchen, sitting room, library, humidor and two offices.

The top floor has five bedrooms, three with ensuites, including the master bedroom. Also upstairs is a full nanny suite. Bailey is extremely busy and doesn't spend as much time at home as he would like.

In the summer his favourite place to relax is the backyard. In the house he is most comfortable in the main floor family room at the back of the home. The family room has ash wood

flooring with a creamy grey carpet. Furnishings include two oversized couches in beige corduroy, a dark-stained square coffee table and a dark-stained square side table.

There is a large TV on a wood counter on top of built-in storage that houses, among other things, Bailey's CD collection. On the wall are three abstract paintings, one in a dark wood frame, the other two matted.

"Our dining room is quite nice for when we entertain," Bailey says.

"We have cream accent walls, but mostly the walls are dark



brown wood panelling. On the windows are wood horizontal blinds that match the panelling.

"The floors are slate tiling. The furniture is all custom-made. The table has a glass top with a pewter base and seats twelve. The chairs are pewter with a fancy dark brown fabric down the middle of the back and on the seat," Bailey continues.

There is also pewter hutch, a cabinet in pewter and glass and a large chandelier in pewter and glass. As well, there are large and small abstract paintings.

His favourite piece of art is a matted painting of apples in the

kitchen. The first time he saw it, he says he knew exactly where it was supposed to be. He finds it very soothing to look at and laughs at the fact that, because he eats all the time, he often finds himself in the kitchen close to it.

Bailey has the ability to be handy, but because of his busy professional schedule he doesn't take the time to apply his skills. Luckily his house is in great shape and doesn't need renovations.

"It is probably one of the most beautiful homes in Oakville, if I do say so myself."

